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PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF VIRCHOW.

BY KARL BLIND.

IN this short and rapid sketch it is not, and could not possibly be my object to treat in any connected way of the political career and the matchless scientific merits of a man of such world-wide renown as Professor Rudolph Virchow, the famed Progressist leader and eminent pathologist. Volumes would be required for such a task. All I wish to do is to supply, in the shape of personal recollections, a number of much-forgotten or scarcely known facts that linger in my memory, or are brought vividly before me by a look at the correspondence I had with him for many years past. When the history of his life is some day written, perhaps they may serve as useful supplements.

I

Few outside of Germany probably know, and even in Germany the younger generation may be little aware of the part Virchow played in the revolution of 1848-49. In September of that year of universal upheaval, we had fought in the Black Forest for the establishment of a united German Commonwealth. Our proclamations, issued in the name of a Provisional Government, bore at the head the words, "*Deutsche Republic: Wohlstand, Bildung, Freiheit für Alle*" (German Republic: Material Welfare, Culture and Freedom for all). After we had tried to uphold these principles with arms in hand, but had been defeated in battle by overwhelming royalist forces, Virchow, at Berlin, actually employed, as his political device, in his speeches and writings, these very words "Material welfare, Culture and Freedom for All." He declared these demands to be "the only true guarantees for the lasting health of the nation."

It was a bold thing for him to do in the North. We in the

South, having been overcome, had been put in chains, had been court-martialled, had narrowly escaped being shot or beheaded by the sword of the executioner, and we had only been freed after an eight months' incredibly cruel imprisonment in the casemates of the Fortress of Rastatt by a new revolutionary rising. All this might have been a warning to Virchow not to adopt the motto prefixed to our proclamations, lest he should be accused at Berlin of republican aspirations.

But he had seen in Silesia, and in the poor districts of the Spessart Forest, the fearful sufferings of the toiling masses from famine typhus; so he boldly agitated under a motto which was a terrifying one to the royal, aristocratic and capitalistic classes. He even embodied it in one of his medical essays, in which he dealt with the deplorable condition of the people of the Spessart. For many years afterwards he dwelt in the same spirit on what he called the urgent necessity of "Social Medicine."

This action of his was the first virtual link between the great scientist, the advanced Liberal leader, and myself, though I did not know him personally at the time, nor did I have any correspondence with him for years afterwards. His incisive and courageous utterances in those earlier days against princely tyranny and wrongful exploitation of the working classes, were of such a kind that they look in the light of the present time like strong revolutionary manifestoes.

When Virchow once sent verbal greetings to me through our common friend Dr. Schliemann, he specially impressed upon him the fact that I had come near being stretched on the sand heap by court-martial bullets. So the discoverer of Troy, Mykene, and Tiryns told me with a degree of curious interest. To me this reference of Virchow to long by-gone days sounded like a remembrance of his own early past, when he made our maxim in social politics his own.

Need I mention that a number of the foremost men in Germany in science, literature, poetry, philosophy and art were, in 1848-49, on the side of the national and democratic movement? Alexander von Humboldt marched in the grand funeral procession which conducted the bodies of those who had fallen on the barricades at Berlin to their last resting-place; the poets Uhland, Freiligrath, Kinkel; the philosophers Ludwig, Feuerbach, and Arnold Ruge; Gottfried Semper, the great architect; Richard

Wagner and many others were implicated in the popular movement—a number of them becoming exiles. Had Wagner been caught at Dresden after the storming of the town by the Prussian troops, his fate would have been the same cruel one as that awarded to the members of the Provisional Government of Saxony, who for ten years or more were held in most inhuman captivity.

II

Virchow was punished for a while by being removed from his professorial chair at Berlin, and driven to accept a position at Wünzburg University in Bavaria. Some years afterwards, on his return to Berlin, he, as a leader of the Parliamentary Progressist party in Prussia, framed the programme which aimed at German unity. He and his friends laid emphasis on this German national character of their aims, whilst, even during the Revolution of 1848-49, the Parliament at Berlin had called itself “The Prussian National Assembly,” as if the conglomerate of territories under the sceptre of the house of Hohenzollern constituted a special nation distinct from the German nation at large. In the same way, an Austrian Reichstag had sat in 1848 at Vienna. Yet at Frankfort there sat, at the same time, a “National German Assembly,” in which Prussia as well as Austria was represented, together with all the minor German states.

It was this threefold parliamentary representation which, by the centrifugal tendencies of two of them, was in a large degree answerable for the final overthrow of the national cause.

The programme framed by Virchow declared that “the greatness of Prussia depended upon the unity of Germany.” Prussia, it is true, was, according to that programme, to become “the central power, on the basis of a common national representation.”

On this point, the democratic party of Germany no doubt joined issue with the Prussian Progressists. Being out-and-out anti-dynastic—that is, republican—it wished, to merge Prussia and the federal provinces of Austria, together with all the minor kingdoms and principalities, into a united Germany, with an elective, popular executive power at her head. The distinct view of the democratic party, for whose aims we worked, was that in this way only could the connection of the federal provinces of Austria, which had been an integral part of our older Empire and of our subsequent Bund, with the remainder of Germany be preserved. Any

other procedure would lead to the separation or ejection of those important federal Austrian provinces from Germany. A dangerous increase of the influence of the Slav element in Austria, and, finally, of despotic Russian power in the southeast of Europe, would be the inevitable result. The events of 1866 have proved the correctness, at any rate, of this latter view.

Virchow and his friends, whilst aiming at German unity, with Prussia as the central power, struck out firmly for the establishment of parliamentary control and truly representative government, with ministerial responsibility, in Prussian home affairs. Out of this the great "constitutional conflict" arose, which in the early sixties seemed to bring matters to a crisis.

In the parliamentary discussions, and in that part of the press which was at Bismarck's command, there came then the fiercest attacks against the Progressist party as led by Virchow. A favorite trick was to identify that party with republicanism. The charge was an utterly false one; for, though among the Progressists there were a few men with a democratic past, and though among others of the same party there was no absolute opposition to the republican principle, taken in a philosophical or academic sense, it was an outrageous misstatement that the Prussian Progressists, officered by Virchow, were only "republicans in disguise." Their real object was constitutional, parliamentary government, especially as to full control of budget and army affairs, without which no such government is possible.

It was understood, and it naturally stands to reason, that republicans wished well to the Progressists in their struggle against budgetless autocratic régime. Many years afterwards, in 1876, when Bismarck was on the pinnacle of success, he himself, in replying to Virchow, said:

"For my part I have attained sufficient impartiality [*objektivität*] to be able fully to comprehend now the circle of ideas which moved the House of Deputies between 1862 and 1866. I acknowledge and I have all respect for the resolution with which the Prussian representatives of the people then upheld that which they considered to be the right. I reproach nobody for it. You could not know then the object which in my opinion government policy was to pursue, nor had I any security that that policy would really succeed. And you had also the right, even if I could have told you about our intentions, to answer that the constitutional principles of our country were of higher value to you than its foreign policy. Hence, I did not wish, at least I do not wish

now to reproach any one, although in the passionate heat of the struggle I may not always have behaved in that way."

Quantum mutatus ab illo, who in 1865 challenged Virchow to a duel with pistols, on account of a speech of the latter in Parliament. One of the Liberal leaders, Twesten, a moderate man if ever there was one, had some time before been challenged by Herr von Manteuffel, and had his arm smashed by a bullet. Now Virchow, one of the most eminent scientific men of the whole civilized world, was invited to meet Bismarck in a duel. To cap the horrible absurdity, Bismarck, by letter to Virchow, informed the latter that the Minister of War would be one of his seconds, and this Minister of War actually appeared at Virchow's house in the latter's absence, to the utmost alarm of the great scientist's family.

To his credit, Virchow declined the challenge. He knew better than to expose his valuable life in this silly fashion. He did expose it, five years later, on a battlefield in France, when with his sons he fetched the wounded out of the range of action amidst the greatest risk.

III

The false charge of leading a party of "republicans in disguise" did not prevent Virchow from speaking out in favor of one who had become an exile for having fought in the cause of republicanism. It was on the occasion of a discussion of Schleswig-Holstein affairs in the Prussian House of Deputies in 1862. Of their own free will, the people of the Duchies had risen, in 1848, and established an army of their own. Forsaken by our princes, they were put back under the foreign yoke of Denmark, after having maintained a struggle for nearly three years. The disgrace of this issue was deeply felt by the German nation; but after the sanguinary orgies of reaction no hope appeared to exist for the "forsaken brethren in the North."

It was then that a propaganda of the Schleswig-Holstein cause was started by me in England, with the aid of a number of German exiles. By the "London Protocol" the fate of the Duchies had been sealed. London, therefore, was a natural centre of action. In 1848, after the disgraceful armistice of Malmö, which was brought about by Royal Prussian policy, we had risen in arms, in the South, by way of protest against this practical dereliction of the national cause. The day after the battle in which

we were worsted, seven of our musicians, who had played the Schleswig-Holstein melody during the two hours' encounter at Staufen, were dragged forth from their hiding-place, and shot out of hand by the brutal victors. I never forgot them.

It is not the place here to mention what we did by numerous publications in English and German—occasionally, also, in French and Italian—to impress the English government, the two Houses of Parliament, the ambassadors and consuls, the editors of all the chief journals, and a number of notabilities in the United Kingdom, as well as to influence public opinion in our fatherland by a similar course of action. Time and money were freely spent for the Schleswig-Holstein cause.

It was then that Virchow, in the House of Deputies at Berlin, flinging a taunt at the Prussian government in his well-known incisive manner, exclaimed: "A single exile has done more for the Schleswig-Holstein cause than the whole diplomatic service of Germany." He mentioned the name of the writer of this present essay. I have always prized these words of his beyond any other recognition of services rendered to the national cause. It was in 1862 that this occurred—before there had been any contact between Virchow and me.

During the Polish insurrection against Russia in 1863-64, the sympathies of German Liberals and democrats were fully with that movement. It was supported, also, by the public opinion of England and France. There again the Progressist party, led by Virchow, stood on the side of freedom as against tyranny.

That Polish movement was planned and carried on on democratic lines. In London, Mazzini, Ledru-Rollin and the present writer had been informed beforehand, by the confidential agent of the "Warsaw Committee," of the very day when the rising would take place. I may mention that Mazzini had by letter declared that it was inadvisable, in his opinion, to start armed action so soon. But the Recruitment Decree of the Czar, by which the whole able-bodied youth of Russian Poland were to be drafted out and to be sent to distant parts of the Empire, left the patriotic party no choice. It will be remembered what a long time it took Russia to quell that rising.

During this prolonged struggle, exiled German democrats were again at one with the political friends of Virchow. On its part, the Prussian government, under Bismarck's leadership, gave, on

the contrary, active support to the Czar, against the Polish insurgents. Ferdinand Lassalle, who under Socialistic guise was in collusion and personal intercourse with Bismarck, issued a fly-sheet to deprecate German sympathies with that democratic rising, a procedure all the more remarkable, as many men of Jewish race, to which he himself belonged, were deeply involved in the insurrection.

It may be useful to record here, incidentally, that Lassalle, whilst describing the Hohenzollern dynasty in one of his speeches as a "true people's kingship," which, "with hand on sword would drive the *bourgeoisie* from the political stage by means of the introduction of universal suffrage," tried to enter at the same time into relations with Louis Blanc, the famed Socialist leader and historian of the great French Revolution. A letter from that French exile was to give Lassalle, so to say, a high standing in the eyes of the German working classes. Louis Blanc, an intimate friend of mine, consulted me on the point. I advised him not to reply, explaining to him the underhand connections of Lassalle. The result was that no answer was given from London to Berlin.

When Lassalle, later on, fell in a duel with a rival of his in a love affair, General Klapka, a common friend of his and mine, who had been Lassalle's second, gave me some noteworthy information. He told me that the Countess Hatzfeldt (Lassalle's intimate friend since the forties, when he aided her in her divorce law suit) had said to him (Klapka): "Had Lassalle lived six months longer, he would have occupied a place in the Prussian government."

Lassalle's fellow-worker and testamentary executor, the renegade ex-democrat Lothar Bucher, became, it will be remembered, the appointed tool of Bismarck, whom he served in the most unscrupulous manner, attacking under an assumed mask former political associates with craftily concocted falsehoods. I can speak on this point from sad personal experience. It was only after the death of Bucher that some of those disreputable actions of his came to light. Among his posthumously published writings one was unwarily included which he had issued under a mask in the "*Grenzboten*," a magazine of which Dr. Busch, Bismarck's Boswell, was editor for some time. When, during Bucher's lifetime, the then anonymous calumniator was publicly declared and

proved in the Berlin "*Vossische Zeitung*" to be a liar, he kept perfectly still, not saying a word in reply. After his death, the editor of his pamphlets did him unconsciously a bad disservice, for the man's knavery then became patent.

IV

It will be remembered that, in the years immediately following the war with France, which had been carried on with the enthusiastic aid of the Liberal party of Germany, Bismarck seemed to turn over a new leaf for a while. It was in those years that the Kulturkampf arose against Papal and hierarchic pretensions. In that struggle, Virchow, the free-thinking scientist, gave hearty aid. It was he, even, who had coined the word Kulturkampf—that is, the fight of civilization against clerical obscurantism. In those days, also, Bismarck made to Virchow the honorable "apology" I have already quoted.

But soon the Imperial Chancellor forsook the cause he had espoused. Though he had boasted he would "never go to Canossa," he practically did, reversing his anti-clerical policy, and resuming, too, his dictatorial manners toward the Liberal representatives of the people. In Virchow, however, he had henceforth once more a determined opponent.

Unfortunately, there came an increasing disruption in the forces of the Opposition; split into contending groups, it was unable to act with any efficiency. There were ominous signs of disintegration, even among the numerically diminished "*Fortschritte Partei*" (Progressist party) whose head Virchow was.

Under these circumstances it seemed to me that the only hope was in the foundation of a new party of wider scope, in which minor differences would be merged, at least for the time being, so as to present a united front to the anti-constitutional dictatorship. In an appeal to that effect, which I made in the "*Vossische Zeitung*," I proposed for it the name "*Allgemeine Deutsche Freisinnige Partei*." Though I held no direct communication on that subject with any members, the name *Freisinnige Partei* was, after a while, substituted for the old designation, "*Fortschritte Partei*."

It would lead too far to enter into German politics in general on this present occasion; so I will only add, in order not to be misunderstood, that, as regards armament on land and on sea, I

have never ceased, since the war so frivolously provoked by France, to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation of Germany, wedged in, on the West and the East, between two Powers of well-known aggressive tendencies. On this point, I have always gone by my own judgment as to our national interest, irrespective of party.

The creation of a German fleet had been strongly advocated by our Liberal and democratic parties, even before and during the revolution. A beginning was made in that direction by the German National Assembly in 1848, but what was accomplished was undone by the diet of kings and princes after the sanguinary overthrow of the national cause. They actually brought whatever men-of-war Germany possessed under the hammer. To me, cherishing the traditions of the Hanseatic league, a strong navy has always appeared an absolute necessity.

As to army affairs, whilst being, on principle, in favor of a militia system like the Swiss one, I could not, since 1870, but recognize that any disarmament such as Virchow had proposed before 1870, or any change of the whole military system, was unfortunately impossible now, so long as France and Russia retained their vast and threatening forces. Some recent speeches of General André, General Cuny, the Bishop of Nancy, and others are in this respect truly an evil sign. Those harangues are literally declarations of war, *in spe*, against Germany. They prove, to the dismay of all friends of humanity, of whom Virchow was one of the noblest, and with all the ordinary coolness of his judgment one of the most enthusiastic, that the time is yet far off when swords can be changed into ploughshares.

V

It only remains to say a few words about my frequent correspondence with Virchow on learned matters. It ranged over a great variety of subjects—the ethnology of the German race as evidenced by the color of the eyes, the hair and the skin, the statistics of which, by investigations made in schools, Virchow had first got up in a systematic manner; the apparently Aryan, even Germanic, kinship of the Ossetes in the Caucasus, where he was going to make inquiries; “Old Trojan tombs and skulls,” the result of his co-operation with Schliemann; the Skythic remnants, found in the South-Russian barrows; the Weddahs of Cey-

lon; prehistoric Egyptian anthropology, and kindred matters. On some of these subjects I had given my opinion in Schliemann's "Troja," in the London "Academy," in the monthly magazine "Time," and elsewhere. A number of his treatises and speeches Virchow was in the habit of sending to me. Whilst expressing his thanks for what I had written, he, with the most unselfish considerateness, added: "By all means I pray you not to think, when I send you such publications, that I ask for any notice or discussion; my sole object is, considering the wide horizon of your scientific interests, to express to you thereby how much I have it at heart to place these attempts of mine before you personally."

On Egyptian race questions, he had made a remarkable discovery, which Professor Sayce, in a letter to Virchow, the main contents of which the latter communicated to me, declared to be one of the most important for the earliest history of Egypt. Yet in England scarcely any notice was taken of what Virchow had written in his "Royal Mummies." He had shown there the strong contrast between the short-headedness of the Egyptians of the old kingdom, and the long-headedness of those of the later kingdom and of the present time. He was evidently surprised at, not to say pained by, the difficulty one met in making this discovery of his properly known in England, for which I had in vain exerted myself.

When he came to London to lecture, he very thoughtfully sent me, beforehand, from Berlin, cards of admission for my wife and myself. On one occasion, when we met after one of his lectures, of which he had sent me a proof in advance, my wife and I were much amused by the truly characteristic greeting he gave me. Heartily shaking hands, he looked over his spectacles, with the sharp glance of the anthropological scientist, and exclaimed with a kind of rapt utterance: "*Wahrhaftig, ein solcher Schädel kann viel aushalten*" ("truly such a skull can endure a great deal"). He referred to that of which he had told Schliemann when sending me friendly remembrances through him.

Virchow's lecture in London, before a meeting of the foremost scientific men of England, was to be followed by another oration of his at Cambridge, in celebration of Harvey, who is generally, but I believe erroneously, considered the first discoverer of the circulation of the blood. At a party given in honor of Virchow,

on the eve of his departure for Cambridge, I took the opportunity of broaching the Harvey question in a conversation with Virchow. Now, though Harvey certainly worked out his doctrine most fully and irrefutably by scientific research, there were various predecessors of his who held that same view quite clearly. More than seventy years ago, Professor Hecker, at Berlin, who taught the history of the medical art at the University, already gave proofs of that fact. I have, myself, gone over the original sources, and found additional evidence in the writings of Leonardo da Vinci, and elsewhere. There can be no doubt that Harvey must have learned this same doctrine in Italy, where he had studied at the University of Padua. His merit, nevertheless, is that he made the deeper and wider investigations: the original discoverer he cannot justly be called. I will not say more here than that Virchow, in a conversation lasting nearly half an hour, endeavored with the utmost eagerness to convince me to the contrary. Finally he observed: "It might as well be contended, and it has even been contended, that the cellular doctrine was not my own." This hint, evidently, was directed against those who had pointed out that Schleiden before him had first applied a theory of that kind to plants, and that Schwann had followed with "Microscopical Inquiries as to the Harmony between the Structure and the Growth of Animals and Plants." Yet though this is so, the merit and glory of Virchow remains, that he has worked out a cellular doctrine of his own, rectifying erroneous notions of predecessors, and fully proving his axiom "*Omnis cellula e cellula.*"

It was, generally speaking, a prominent and excellent trait in Virchow's character that he kept his mind impartially open to anything he considered right or good, whatever country it came from. In this sense, whilst being a German patriot of unbending Liberal principles, he may be said to have been a truly international man—cosmopolitan in the best acceptance of the word. When in matters of sanitary import he found praiseworthy arrangements in this or that case, even in backward Russia, he hastened to proclaim the fact loudly enough, with his usual incisiveness of language. This was not done with the purpose of gaining favor abroad, but with the object of spurring his own countrymen to stronger exertion. His was a kind of "cold enthusiasm," as it has been called, and it often found utterance

in sharp, even satirically bitter sayings, little relished by adversaries, time-serving trimmers and popularity hunters. Whilst in France, unfortunately, after the war so recklessly provoked by her, Chauvinist feelings and actions were for many years a deplorable feature, even in the scientific, literary and artistic world, which ought to form a republic of its own, including all civilized countries, Virchow steadfastly refused to countenance anti-French reprisals at home. His judgment of the political situation remained, however, unbiased. Thus the scientific interests he had in Russia did not make him forget the dangers threatening from that quarter the freedom, the independence and the civilization of European nations.

In 1876, when I foresaw the coming eruption of Russia in the direction of Constantinople, and wrote to Virchow to ask whether the German people could not be roused to a proper understanding of the situation, he answered: "Your observation as to the East is certainly very correct; nobody can feel it more painfully than I myself do, that our people, and even our Parliament, silently look at the tragedy which the Russians are enacting." He pleaded, in the same letter, the fact of his not being a member of the Reichstag, and his being so much engaged, with all the strength available to him, in scientific work, as causes preventing him from consecutive political action. He added that though he still attempted, now and then, to originate a political move, he was much hampered by the "wholly unjust assertion that he was a personal enemy of the Imperial Chancellor." 'Any fair-minded observer, I need not say, could not possibly have preferred such a charge against Virchow. His opposition was not a personal one, but founded on principle.

Whether scientific or political questions were at issue, Virchow always spoke his mind fearlessly, having only Truth and Right as his guides. Germany and the whole world are the poorer for the loss of such a man. At his death-bed, homage was done to him at last, even by those in high quarters who, during his laborious life-time had for so many years tried to leave him in the shade. His great fame had certainly never suffered from their pettiness.

KARL BLIND.